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IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

A BIMONTHLY PERIODICAL

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# THE ORTHODOX WORD

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## IN MEMORIAM

# ARCHBISHOP JOHN MAXIMOVTCH

1896 - 1966

As the final page of this issue of *The Orthodox Word* was being prepared for printing, in late afternoon of July 2, word was received of the sudden death in Seattle of our beloved Archpastor, the spiritual guide and inspirer of our Fr. Herman Brotherhood, Archbishop John.

Mourning together with the countless thousands of his orphaned flock throughout the world, we present this issue with the *Life* of Saint Nectarios, a Saint whom His Eminence knew and venerated, and whose *Life* he had encouraged us to print, as a tribute to his memory.

Archbishop John himself being unquestionably one of the great Orthodox hierarchs of this century, and more than that -- a righteous and truly holy man, -- his own *Life* will be presented in a future issue of *The Orthodox Word*.

May the Lord God grant to his faithful servant

Eternal Rest

and

MEMORY ETERNAL.



ST. NECTARIOS KEPHALAS

1846-1920

Commemorated November 9

The first complete presentation in English of the Life of  
the most recently canonized Orthodox Saint, translated  
by the renowned author of Anchored in God.

All illustrations courtesy of Holy Transfiguration Monastery,  
Boston, Mass.

## THE LIFE OF ST. NECTARIOS KEPHALAS

By ARCHIMANDRITE JOACHIM SPETSIERIS<sup>1</sup>

Translated and Annotated by

Constantine Cavarnos

Wheaton College, Norton, Mass.

**N**EITHER YEARS NOR ages are of significance before immortal virtue. *Virtue does not perish, even when one dies, for it is not corporeal* (Euripides). Virtue does not die, because, as the Apostle of the Gentiles Paul says, Christ its judge *is the same yesterday and today and forever* (Heb. 13: 8). A truthful witness of these statements is the ever memorable Metropolitan of Pentapolis Nectarios, who rose like another bright star in these gloomy days, when the dense darkness of materialism seeks to destroy the world.

The indefatigable worker of virtue Nectarios is proved to be truly great, not only through the miracles that he continues to perform even after his death, but also through his divine virtues and his admirable life, which was nothing else than a continual and unceasing working of virtue.

This blessed one was born in Silyvria, Eastern Thrace, of devout parents, Demos and Vasiliki Kephalas, on October 1, 1846, and was named Anastasios at baptism. From his early youth it was evident what kind of person he was going to become: sensible, prudent, meek, self-controlled, obedient to his parents who, even though unlettered, were

1. Joachim Spetsieris (c. 1858-1943), a native of the island of Kephallenia, led a hermit's life at Nea Skete on the Holy Mountain of Athos from the age of eighteen to twenty-seven, and again during the latter period of his life. In 1885 he went to Jerusalem, where he was ordained a deacon and then a priest, and studied at the School of the Holy Cross. In 1891 he was appointed parish priest at the Church of the Exarchate of the Holy Sepulchre in Athens. At this time he began to study at the Rizarios Ecclesiastical School, which in 1894 was placed under the direction of St Nectarios. After graduating from the school he attended the University of Athens, and received the degree of Bachelor of Theology. Subsequently he served as a preacher at Messolonghi, Pyrgos, Corinth, Lamia, Amphissa, Ithaca, and Halkis. At first his teacher at the Rizarios School, St. Nectarios later became one of Father Spetsieris' close friends. Spetsieris authored a number of books, the most popular of

## THE ORTHODOX WORD

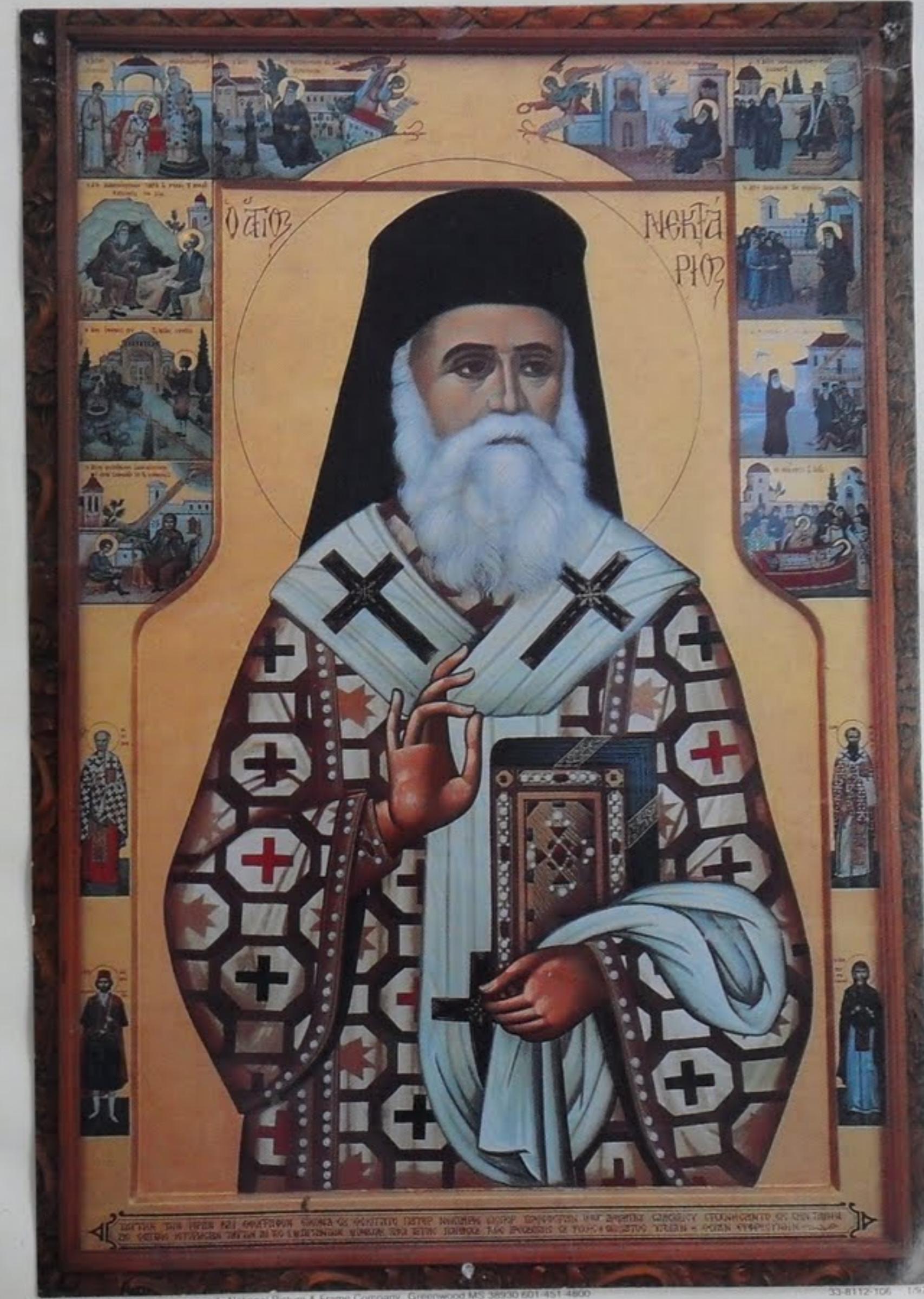
very pious and brought him up *in the nurture and admonition of the Lord* (Eph. 6: 4). Not only the parents of little Anastasios, but all his relatives and neighbors as well, used to look at him with admiration.

He disliked children's games and found pleasure in praying and memorizing psalms and holy sayings. And from childhood he had one fervid desire: to study and eventually become a preacher of the Gospel, even though the poverty of his parents did not permit this. Divine Providence, however, had destined him to become a shepherd of men and a teacher, for it foreknew his future virtue. As the Apostle Paul says: *Those whom He foreknew He also predestined* (Rom. 8: 29).

At the age of fourteen he left his birthplace and went to Constantinople, where some relative of his engaged him as a clerk at his store. While in the midst of worldly distractions, he did not neglect prayer, church attendance on holy days, and the reading of sacred and instructive books. Whatever sayings and apothegms he considered beneficial to his neighbor he wrote on packages and wrappings, so that the customers of the store might read them and profit spiritually, as he remarks in the preface of his book *Treasury of Sayings*. He says: "The present book is a product of long and intense work, and grew out of the prematurely developed ardent desire to transmit useful knowledge. For at an early age I envied above all the work of the teacher, and I eagerly turned to it. This work, however, was far above my zeal, because of my inadequate preparation for it. But the desire was strong and persistent. In order to fulfill it, I had recourse to the treasures of our ancestors, these being handy and at my disposition, and I could hoard them. Thus the work began, and a meagre collection of sayings, opinions, and apothegms was made. But the means of transmitting them was also difficult, owing to the lack of money. I thought I could utilize as publication sheets the cigarette packages of Constantinople's tobacco-sellers. The idea seemed to me a good one, and was almost at once put into practice. Each day I wrote on many of these 'sheets' various maxims from my collection, so that the

which is that on the *Hermitess Photini*, having gone into four editions. The text that follows is a slightly abridged translation of his *Biographical Sketch of St. Nectarios*, which was published in Athens in 1929, nine years after the death of Nectarios. I have made certain corrections here and there on the basis of Archimandrite Titos Matthaiakis' biography of the Saint, which is included in the book *Osior Nectarios Kephalas* that was edited by him and published in 1955 in Athens. Matthaiakis had full access to the Saint's archives, and his biography is the most comprehensive and best documented one. However, it is rather long and written in a manner far removed from the traditional style of Eastern Orthodox lives of saints.

OPPOSITE: St. Nectarios. Icon by Basil Lepouras after an icon by Photios Kontoglou.  
Courtesy of Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Boston, Mass.



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customers might out of curiosity read the statements and be instructed in what is wise and good. Such was the beginning of the present book and the longing out of which it grew."

Who can read this and not admire the Saint's great love for his neighbor? In the words of the Apostle Paul, he employs everything, he uses every device, in order to benefit his neighbor morally.

Not much transpired since then, when his yearning for study began to be fulfilled. He left the store and found employment as an overseer of children at the school in the estate of the Holy Sepulchre, where he performed with great zeal the service that had been committed to him. In addition, he taught the lower grades and attended the higher ones.

At the age of twenty he left Constantinople and went to Chios, where he was appointed a primary school teacher at the village of Lythi. He remained here for seven years, instructing not only students, but also all the peasants, exhorting them to piety and virtue, and living an exemplary godly life.

Being an ardent lover of the monastic life, he often visited the Monastery of the Holy Fathers, and conversed about the ascetic life with the very devout restorer of the monastery, Father Pachomios. As he aspired to the angelic habit of the monks, he entered Nea Moni,<sup>1</sup> the "New Monastery," and was tonsured a monk,<sup>2</sup> receiving the new name of Lazarus. Here he was appointed secretary, and stayed for three years. A year after his tonsure, the Metropolitan of Chios, the ever-memorable Gregory, ordained him a deacon and renamed him Nectarios. While at Nea Moni, he studied unceasingly Holy Scripture and the sacred writings of the holy Fathers. At the same time his heart was being consumed by the burning desire to study theology, in order that he might become useful to his fellow Christians. And the more he studied, the more this desire for study increased in intensity, even though the material means for such study were always inadequate.

But God, Who, as the Psalmist says, *does the will of those who fear Him* (Ps. 144: 19), enlightened John Horemis, a wealthy Chian, and he sent Nectarios to Athens to study at his expense. His joy was indescribable when he arrived at that city, where the great luminaries of the Church, Gregory Nazianzen and Basil, had studied. Rejoicing that his longing began to be fulfilled, blessing the all-holy name of the heavenly

1. Famous for its superb Byzantine mosaics, which date from the middle of the eleventh century, when it is believed to have been built.

2. In 1876, at the age of thirty.

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Father, and praying for his benefactor, he devoted himself to his studies with zeal and self-denial, knowing no other roads but that to the school and that to the church on Sundays and holy days.

After receiving his high school diploma, at the exhortation of his patron John Horemis, he went to the Patriarch of Alexandria Sophronios. The latter took him under his protection and sent him to Athens to study theology.<sup>1</sup>

In 1885, having finished his studies at the university and received the degree of Bachelor of Theology, he returned to Alexandria. Here Sophronios ordained him a presbyter<sup>2</sup> and, not long after this,<sup>3</sup> Metropolitan of Pentapolis and his vicar (*epitropos*) in Cairo. The oil had now been placed in the lamp. Everyone looked at him with admiration and spoke of him with great reverence, saying: "Here is a worthy functionary of the Most High; here is a man fit for the Patriarchal throne of Alexandria." As time went by, the reputation of the holy Metropolitan of Pentapolis grew. This occasioned envy among those about the Patriarch, and they finally succeeded in arousing the Patriarch Sophronios against him, with the result that the holy Father was removed from the Church of Egypt on May 3, 1890.<sup>4</sup> He left Egypt and went to Athens with the intention of going from there to Mount Athos, to lead a monastic life. But many persons, among them the bishop of Patras Damaskinos, urged him to stay in Greece,<sup>5</sup> where he might greatly benefit the people through his life according to Christ and through his preaching.

When Nectarios arrived at Athens, he had no money at all, inasmuch as whatever money he earned in Egypt he used to give away to the poor and spend for the publication of writings that would benefit Christian readers. His disregard for money was such that many said: "Money and the Metropolitan of Pentapolis are two contrary things."

1. He entered the University of Athens in 1882.

2. In 1886.

3. In 1889.

4. The reasons given by the Patriarchate of Alexandria to the Greek government for the removal of Nectarios from the Church of Egypt and his departure for Greece were that he had shown tendencies towards insubordination and immorality. See T. Matthaiakis, *Osios Nectarios Kephalas*, pp. 30-33, where the Saint's correspondence shows plainly that he was a victim of a malicious intrigue and slander. Matthaiakis remarks (p. 39) that the reason why the Patriarch compelled Nectarios to leave the Church of Egypt was that he came to fear lest the clergy and laity might raise Nectarios to the Patriarchal throne while he (Sophronios) was still living.

5. I.e., in liberated Greece. Mount Athos was at that time still under Turkish rule. Athos continued to have a strong attraction for the Saint long after this. He visited its monasteries in 1898, during the summer recess of the Rizarios School, which he then directed.

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And though he lacked even his daily bread, he did not ask for anything from anyone, nor did he say that he was in want, but waited with confidence for Divine succor.

Inner as well as outer promptings finally led Nectarios to stay in the world and preach. He accepted an appointment as preacher in Euboea.<sup>1</sup> After serving as a preacher there for two and a half years, he was transferred to the province of Phthiotis and Phocis,<sup>2</sup> where he preached the word of God until 1894. At this time he was invited by the Ministry of Church Affairs to assume the direction of the Rizarios Ecclesiastical School.<sup>3</sup> Here he taught pastoral theology and other subjects to the higher grades.

Before his appointment as director, the Rizarios School was always in a state of disturbance; but as soon as he took over the direction of the school there was peace, and it began to function normally, because he treated the students and the staff of the school as a loving father, and hence everyone loved him and greatly respected him, obeying his counsels and admonitions.

He often came to the Exarchate of the Holy Sepulchre, where I was a priest, and many times when he departed I accompanied him as far as the Rizarios School, and listened to him as he spoke in a hortatory manner. One day, as we were walking to the school, he said to me: "When a man comes to understand his destiny, and that he is a child of the heavenly Father, that is, of the Supreme Good, he looks with contempt at the goods of this world. It is true that the virtuous man endures temptations and humiliations in this world; but he rejoices deep within his heart, because he has his conscience at peace. The world hates and despises virtuous men, yet it envies them, for as our ancestors used to say, even the enemy admires virtue."

Everywhere, one may say, wherever he happened to be, the holy Metropolitan of Pentapolis taught piety, faith in God, and love of one's neighbor, like a true disciple of the Lord.

He departed from Egypt, as we have said, but he left the immortal memory of a saintly man. And when in 1899 a new Patriarch of Alexandria was to be elected, Patriarch Sophronios having died, Nectarios was invited by many Greeks to go to Egypt and declare his can-

1. The appointment was made in February, 1891, by the Ministry of Church Affairs.

2. In August, 1893.

3. This school was established at Athens in 1844 for the training of priests.

didacy to the Patriarchal throne of Alexandria. He went there, but left for Athens at once, because although he had many supporters there, he perceived that the clergy of the throne of Alexandria were acting in support of Photios, who, being a member of the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre, was also supported by Patriarch Damianos of Jerusalem. Seeing this, as he always loved peace, the holy Metropolitan of Pentapolis returned immediately to his position at Athens. As he told me, "Listening to the entreaties of our fellow countrymen, I went to Egypt, not to cause uneasiness and factions, but to bring peace and love."

The periodical *Anapasis*<sup>1</sup> wrote at that time: "The candidacy of His Eminence, the Metropolitan of Pentapolis, is one of the weightiest, because he is among the most distinguished, well educated, and fervent Hierarchs the Eastern Orthodox Church has to show. He is a very productive writer, an indefatigable worker of the Spirit, having as his food and pleasure the service of the word of God and truth. He is free of avarice to the extreme, a fiery lover of goodness, serene but strong, meek yet firm, pure in life. He is modest, decorous, dignified in appearance and bearing, above pettiness and intrigues, passion and malice. He is one of the most superior episcopal personalities. And the harmonious totality of his excellences places him among the most select ones. If someone abler than he should be preferred for the Patriarchal throne of Alexandria, no one will rejoice more

1. "Regeneration," a religious periodical founded in 1887.



St. Nectarios when director of the Rizarios School

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than he; if he should be chosen, modest as he is, he will have only one ambition, how to prove himself worthy of his mission in all humility" (*Anapasis*, September 9, 1899).

This is what *Anapasis* wrote. But God had destined him to stay near the capital of Greece even after his death, and through his holiness to teach piety and love of God and neighbor, and immortal virtue in general.

A great number of persons went to him to receive his counsel and to confess. And as certain devout women often expressed to him the desire to embrace the angelic life of nuns, he persistently entreated the Lord to deem him worthy of founding a convent near Athens. And God, Who, as Holy Scripture says, *does the will of those who fear Him*, listened to his prayers and deigned that he should become the founder of the Convent of the Holy Trinity in Aegina, which was established as follows.

The Monastery of the Dormition of the Theotokos in Aegina had as its Abbot Archimandrite Theodosios Papaconstantinou. Saint Nectarios, then director of the Rizarios School, made known to him his desire to build a convent for nuns in Aegina, if God deigned it; and he asked him if there was a suitable place there. The Archimandrite replied that near Palaia Chora<sup>1</sup> there were some ruins that according to surviving traditions and testimonies belonged to a convent for nuns, of which there survived only a little chapel dedicated to the *Zoodochos Pighi*, the "Life-giving Source," and two old cells. On September 10, 1904, the holy Father went to Aegina accompanied by three nuns and was received at the pier by Archimandrite Theodosios. The latter led him to the estate of the monastery of which he was the Abbot, and the next day they proceeded to the dissolved convent, which was inhabited by an old woman, who lived by the alms of pious Christians.

During that whole night the Metropolitan and his company prayed to the Lord to help them rebuild the ruined convent, if this were His will. The following day he left for Athens (for being the director of the Rizarios School he could not be absent), after having met the mayor of Aegina, Nicholas Pepas, and made known to him his intention, that is, that he wanted to rebuild the destroyed convent, and begged him to repair the two surviving cells and cede the lot to him for the reconstruction. The mayor promised to comply with his wishes.

1. The former chief town of Aegina, of which only some churches survive.



Aegina: The Convent of the Holy Trinity, established by St. Nectarios, as it appears today

In the meantime Archimandrite Theodosios undertook the maintenance of the nuns, whom the Saint left at the old convent; and on Sundays as well as on other holy days he sent a priest of his monastery to officiate in the church of the convent, until the Metropolitan settled there in 1908. That year the Saint retired as director of the Rizarios School, settled in Aegina, and began erecting the convent with zeal and self-denial.

Who can describe the indefatigable toils and struggles of the holy Metropolitan of Pentapolis for the reconstruction of the convent? Extremely vigilant regarding the observance of the sacred forms in the doxology, chant, orderliness, solemnity, and in the angelic way of life and Christly conduct, he forbade everything that was out of harmony with the monastic life, particularly the free entrance of men in the convent, instituting a fully coenobitic system.<sup>2</sup>

He himself served as the priest of the convent, preached the word of God quite regularly, counseled the nuns both as a group and individually, and in a word, like *a lamp on a stand* (Matt. 5:15), he guided all in the way of salvation. Despite the many cares of the convent,<sup>2</sup> he

1. A coenobitic monastery is one which is governed by an abbot or abbess, and in which all property is held in common and the meals are partaken by all together in the refectory. A blind nun, named Xenia, served as the first abbess of the Convent of the Holy Trinity, from 1904 to 1923, when she died.

2. Besides serving as priest of the convent and as the spiritual father of the nuns, St. Nectarios "occupied himself sometimes with assiduous study and writing, especially during the winter, and sometimes with manual work of a heavy nature, such as tilling the gardens and farms, watering them with water that he carried from a long distance, opening water-courses and sewers, carrying large stones on his shoulders for the construction of cells for the convent, and repairing the shoes of the nuns" (T. Matthaiakas, *op. cit.*, p. 60).

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did not cease writing edifying books for Christians living in the world: He wrote not a few and published most of them. His writings include 1 *Sermons*, 2 *Diverse Sermons*, 3 *The Seven Ecumenical Synods*, 4 *Memorial Services*, 5 *God's Revelation*, 6 *Concerning Man*, 7 *Care of the Soul*, 8 *True and Pseudo Education*, 9 *Treasury of Sayings*, 10 *Christian Ethics*, 11 *Pastoral Theology*, 12 *Sacred Catechism*, 13 *Christology*, 14 *The Immortality of the Soul*, 15 *The Gospel Story*, 16 *Study on Repentance*, 17 *Confession*, 18 *The Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist*, 19 *The Saints of God*, 20 *Prayer Book*, 21 *Know Thyself*, 22 *Theotokarion*, 23 *Pandect of the Divinely-inspired Scriptures*, 24 *The Psalter*, 25 *Hymns to the Holy Trinity*, 26 *St. Augustine's Book of Cries to God*, 27 *Study Concerning the Causes of the Schism*, 28 *The One, Holy, and Apostolic Church*, 29 *Sacred Tradition*, 30 *The Divine Mysteries*, 31 *Historical Study Concerning the Precious Cross*, 32 *The Ever-Virgin Theotokos*. These he published at Cairo, Alexandria, and Athens. His unpublished works are ten in number.<sup>1</sup> All his writings evince his profound learning and true love of God and of neighbor.

After settling at the convent he lived an altogether spiritual life, being always in a state of divine contemplation, like Arsenios the Great and the other Wakeful Fathers. He never neglected mental prayer: *Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy upon me.*<sup>2</sup> For this reason an exceptional sweetness



*The last photograph of the Saint,  
taken a few months before his repose.*

1. Since this was written (1929), the following works of St. Nectarios were edited and published by Matthaiakis in the periodical *Theologia: The Divine Liturgy of the Holy and Glorious Apostle and Evangelist Mark* (Athens, 1955, Vol. 26, No. 1, pp. 14-36) and *Historical Study Concerning the Ordained Fast* (1956, Vol. 27, No. 3, pp. 463-480).

2. Archimandrite Amphilochios Makris (of the Monastery of St. John the Divine in Patmos) who knew Nectarios personally, having associated with him from 1914 to the time of his death, remarks: "He was a man of prayer, and had one thought, how to create centers of prayer. He spoke of mental prayer because he had cultivated this higher mode of prayer in himself" (Matthaiakis, *op. cit.* p. 132).

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radiated from his serene countenance, showing a holiness of sanctification in the Holy Spirit.

He was venerable, meek, kindly, humble, extremely compassionate and charitable. He carried on the good struggle until he was assailed by a serious disease, or rather until the time came for him to depart to Christ, after Whom he had aspired, and receive the crown of righteousness.

For a year and a half he suffered from prostatitis, experiencing severe pains and enduring them with exemplary fortitude, always thanking the heavenly Father and blessing His all-holy name. Despite the sharpness of the pains, he at first refused to submit to medical treatment. As the sisters, however, persisted in their entreaties, he finally yielded and was taken to the Aretaieon Hospital.<sup>1</sup> Here, after a period of fifty days, he surrendered his spirit to the Lord on November 8, 1920, at the age of seventy-four.

Some time after his falling asleep, strangely a fragrance was emitted by his holy body, filling the room in which it lay and from which it was carried the next day to the chapel of the hospital, and thence by automobile to the Church of the Holy Trinity at Piraeus. While it was in the church many went to venerate it, and with amazement noted the fragrant myrrh that was dripping from his hair and beard.<sup>2</sup>

The same day it was brought to the town of Aegina and from there, as a precious treasure, to his convent, where it was buried with great solemnity.

After five months the nuns, desiring to construct a marble tomb, opened his grave and removed the sacred body, which was whole and unaltered, emitted a fragrance, and bore all the signs of sainthood. It remained in the Abbess' office until the construction of the tomb had been completed.

### 1. At Athens.

2. Such a phenomenon has been noted in the case of certain other Saints, who have come to be known as *myrolytai*, "myrrh-emitting." Thus, in the *Ladder* of St. John Climacos we read of a "wonderful man" named Menas, who had lived in a monastery for fifty-nine years fulfilling every kind of office (*diakonema*): "On the third day after the falling asleep of this holy man, as we were performing the customary memorial service, suddenly the entire place where the Saint was lying was filled with fragrance. Then the great man (the Abbot) allowed us to uncover the coffin in which the Saint had been placed. This done, we saw that fragrant myrrh was flowing from the precious soles of his feet" (*Ladder*, Constantinople, 1883, p. 37).

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Three years after the death of the Saint, the nuns opened the tomb and found the holy body incorrupt as before and giving off the same fragrance. When the Most Blessed Archbishop of Athens Chrysostom personally examined it with devout interest, he ordered that the body be placed again in the grave and removed at the end of seven years from the falling asleep of the Saint.<sup>1</sup> The nuns acted accordingly, and the body was henceforth regarded as sanctified.

I, too, went to the convent of the ever memorable, Most Holy Nectarios, together with Archimandrite Theodosios Papaconstantinou, because I had been hearing a great deal about the sacred body. Now I confess with absolute sincerity that when I approached the tomb to pray, I smelled the fragrance of the holy body; and I was so moved, that I cried with all my heart and all my soul: "Truly, the Metropolitan of Pentapolis Nectarios has received from God the gift of sainthood, like the Saints of our Orthodox Faith!"

The ever-memorable one performed not a few miracles when he was living and continues to work many after his death.<sup>2</sup> We omit them for the sake of brevity and because, as St. Gregory the Theologian says in his sermon on the death of St. Basil the Great, "miracles are for the unbelieving and not for the believers. The marks of Saints are their life according to God and their divine conduct." But a most truthful piece of evidence of the sainthood of Nectarios is the fragrance emitted by his sacred body.<sup>3</sup> It is a very clear sign of the indwelling of Divine grace in him, both before and after his death.

1. The removal of the relics of St. Nectarios took place on Sept. 2, 1953, the body having remained whole and incorrupt until a few years prior to this. See T. Matthaiakis, *op. cit.* p. 82.

2. Matthaiakis says this about the miracles of the Saint: "The holy Father worked miracles while still living. But the miracles which the grace of God has been performing in the faithful through his intercession are innumerable. These miracles are events witnessed in each instance by many persons and indeed by trustworthy, eminent men, distinguished for their higher education, character, and social position. Moreover, whenever they have occurred, they have been perceived by all the pilgrims present, who saw the sufferers in their former state for whole hours and sometimes took part in the subduing of frantic persons possessed by evil spirits. Hence these miracles are facts attested by so many men, not as a result of suggestion or other such cause, but by each one after personal observation and judgment. Furthermore, miracles have often taken place far from the convent and the island of Aegina, and have been described by the healed pilgrims who come to the convent with offerings" (*op. cit.*, pp. 78-79).

3. After the removal of the remains of St. Nectarios from the tomb they were found to emit an ineffable fragrance stronger than before, Matthaiakis informs us (*op. cit.*, pp. 11, 62).

*The holy head of St. Nectarios, encased in a mitre, the top of which can be removed so that the faithful may kiss it. This relic, together with the bones of the Saint, which are enclosed in a silver box, are kept at the Saint's convent on the island of Aegina. Twenty years and more after the Saint's repose, his body was preserved whole and incorrupt; but whether for our sins or for other reasons known to God, the flesh and skin finally dissolved, leaving only his holy bones, which are still fragrant.*

*The icon behind the reliquary portrays the Saint on a bishop's throne.*



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Saint Nectarios attained to the same enviable level of sainthood as the great luminaries and Saints of our Church. He did not ascend upon pillars, nor did he withdraw to hermitages, nor did he contend with cruel persecutions and tragic tortures, like those great combatants of our holy religion, the Martyrs; but we can say that his whole life was nothing else than a continuous doxology to God, and a tireless effort and assiduous concern to benefit suffering society morally and religiously. He lived in the world, but was not, as the Saviour says, of the world. He trod on the earth yet conducted himself like a citizen of heaven. He had the form of man, but lived like an angel. He was clothed with flesh, but was a strict keeper and guardian of chastity. He associated with various kinds of persons, but spoke as a spiritual man, alien to the present world. He was transported by sublime ideals and warmed by the aspiration for moral perfection, and hence he abided in a state of inner calm and blessedness. His was a peacemaking holiness, inspired by evangelical virtue and meditation on the eternal Kingdom of God.

## SOME MIRACLES OF SAINT NECTARIOS

By D. PANAGOPOULOS<sup>1</sup>

Translated by Constantine Cavarnos

### I

During the last days of his life, the Saint was in the room for the incurables of the hospital, among many poor patients who were at the point of death. Beside his bed there was a patient who was paralyzed for years. As soon as the Saint gave up his spirit, a nurse of the hospital together with the nun who had accompanied the Saint began to prepare the holy body for transportation to Aegina and burial. When they removed the old sweater of the Saint, they placed it for convenience on the bed of the paralytic and continued preparing the body. Strangely, the paralytic patient at once became well and rose from his bed, praising the Lord. This was the first miracle after the falling asleep<sup>2</sup> of the Saint, through which God our Lord confirmed the sainthood of Nectarios.

1. Panagopoulos, a very devout Orthodox layman, is the author of many religious works. The accounts of the miracles that follow have been taken from his book, *Nothing is Uncurable for St. Nectarios*, which was first published in 1963 and has since gone into a third edition. The first edition reports 83 miracles; the third, 200.

2. Koimesis, a term used to denote the death of the righteous.

## SOME MIRACLES OF ST. NECTARIOS

### II

Mrs. Anna Ioannou Katsounaki, a resident of Piraeus, relates the following:

In 1949, I was operated on at the anticancer hospital "Saint Savvas," because I was suffering from cancer, and they removed my entire uterus. When the definite period of therapy was over, Doctor Papakonstantinou joyfully declared that I had now escaped from the danger of death. Do not be afraid any longer, he said. However, if you should ever see blood, then realize that your end has arrived, because it is a sign that cancer has appeared somewhere again and has produced a new malignant spot.

Eight years passed since then, when in May, 1957, I felt pains in my abdomen, which resulted in the appearance of blood one evening, that is, of that sign which was notifying me of my end. I spent all that night sitting in my bed and crying inconsolably. In the morning my sister Eleftheria and her husband Nicholas Mortzanos, returning from Aegina, where they had spent the Easter holy days, dropped in my home. Although I wanted to conceal my misfortune, in order not to make them unhappy, my sister, seeing my pitiful state, insisted on learning what my trouble was. As she justly insisted, my husband had to reveal the truth.

My sister at once, displaying no fear, but with composure and confidence, which she drew from her faith in the miracle-worker Saint Nectarios, approached me and consoled me, saying:

"Don't be afraid, my sister. You believe in God and accept the many miracles of St. Nectarios which have taken place in our family."

At this point she took a small bottle from her handbag, containing oil from the sacred lamp (*kandela*) of Saint Nectarios, gave it to me and said:

"Take this and pray to the Saint to make you well. I shall pray, too. Daub your abdomen with this blessed oil of the Saint, and rest assured that in this way you shall become well."

I complied fully with her suggestion, prayed, sought the help of St. Nectarios. And behold the miracle! From that time my pains stopped, I felt well, and the flow of blood ceased. From then until today, when I am writing you about my case, in the year 1962, I am perfectly free of the accursed disease.

Blessed be the name of Saint Nectarios!

Miss Catherine Drettakis, a resident of 13 Strategou Koutouli Street, Koukaki, Athens, relates the following:

My father, Emmanuel Drettakis, suffered from kidney stones. On July 17, 1962, he had a crisis of the kidneys. He went to the physician Androulakis and was examined. The latter said that stones had been formed and his condition was critical. Every day his condition became worse, and at the advice of the same physician he entered the Clinic "Precious Cross," on July 26, 1962. As soon as he was admitted, they tested his blood and found that the urea had reached 1.95. They made an X-ray examination of the kidneys and found that they were swollen and thus the flow of urine was blocked. The physician told us that an operation had to be performed. It was to be performed on July 28, but my father entreated the doctor to postpone the operation, and he postponed it to July 30.

The afternoon before the operation, my Father begged my mother to bring him some oil of Saint Nectarios. As soon as she brought it, he got up, prayed for five minutes, and drank it.

The same evening I had a photograph of the Saint, which I placed on my pillow, and I prayed almost during the whole night to the Saint to restore my father's health.

After he took the oil, his water began to pass like a stream and simultaneously the stones began to come out one after the other. The next day, the blood and the urine were tested. They were normal; and my father returned home full of health, thanks to the miraculous power of the Saint.

Mrs. Demetra Anar. Petrakou, of Ambelochorion, Laconia, relates the following:

In July of 1963 I was admitted to the Zanneion Hospital at Piraeus, and was operated on the left breast, where I had a tumor. After my departure from the hospital, I took radiation treatments at the Anticancer Hospital (St. Savvas). But after 45 days a tumor appeared on my right breast, and you can imagine...

At the Anticancer Hospital a lady urged me to pray to St. Nectarios, otherwise I would accomplish nothing. In my despair, I went to Aegina together with my husband, and prayed and entreated the Saint with my whole soul. We took oil from the sacred lamp of the Saint and crossed the tumor, and it automatically disappeared. Glory to God!

## ON THE WRITINGS OF SAINT NECTARIOS

By JOHN MAVROS

*Graduate of the Theological School,  
University of Athens*

**N**HE WRITINGS OF St. Nectarios cover almost the whole realm of theological thought. Especially respected are his moral works and his praises of the Most Holy Virgin. Uniting in his writings originality of thought, elegance of style, and a fortunate choice of subjects, he is considered one of the greatest and most discerning prelates of our times.

His published works are over thirty in number, as enumerated above in his Life. Knowing well both Latin and French, he was able to treat fully the subjects he chose. His *Study Concerning the Causes of the Schism* is considered to be a thorough refutation of the Papist errors in such matters as Papal infallibility.

More than in these qualities, however, the force of the Saint's writings lies in the assistance they give to the faith of his readers, as well as in the harmony of the Saint's own life with them. His own explanation of the reason for his writing will make this clear. He mentions among other things in the introduction to his *Christology* that:

"Our main purpose in composing the present Christology was to maintain Christians in faith, so that they may be firm and immovable in faith, worthily putting the Gospel into practice without fearing any enemy, reasonably and rightly and reverently living in this age in expectation with divine hope of our Lord and Divine Glory..."

St. Nectarios could properly be characterized as a "new Kollyvias," continuing the struggle for strict Orthodoxy and spiritual life of the famous *Kollyvades* of the 18th century: Saints Nicodemos, Makarios,

## THE ORTHODOX WORD

Arsenios, and others.<sup>1</sup> Never did he think his attainments sufficient, always was he in search of new ways to express his overflowing feelings of love for men.

Thus he writes in one of his letters:

"I began thinking about finding a suitable place not far away from the convent, about half or three quarters of an hour away, where a theological school could be built from which preachers would go out to preach God's word, full of zeal and divine love, working with complete self-abnegation for Christ's Church, offering themselves as sacrifices to Jesus Christ on the divine altar of love. Pray to God that my desire may be fulfilled for God's glory and for the good of humanity."

Only a heart aflame with divine love can think and act with such self-abnegation and continual exertion of its strength in the service of the gospel of love.

It is perhaps surprising that, in spite of the evident "sociability" which the Saint possessed, he never undervalued the perfect sacrifice of those souls who, in their faithfulness to God, abandoned all to live alone and pray in holes of the earth. In reply to a monk who found a great inequality between the episcopal rank of the Saint and his monastic status, he wrote:

"Allow me, your holiness, to express my opinion on the relative worthiness and preeminence of these two persons (bishop and monk). I would say that your holiness rightly distinguishes an inequality between them, but that you wrongly find the preeminence to lie with the rank of bishop. As for us, dear brother, feeling such an inferiority and nakedness, we do not dare to compare ourselves to the least of the monks, living in the exercise of the decent policy. Truly, what is more brilliant and worthy of respect than this policy? It is what orders the whole picture and gives to it its archetypal beauty. It conducts to bliss, ornaments existence, and leads to philosophy; it discovers mysteries, learns truth... conducts to God. This is why, dear brother, I am convinced that the monk is preeminent to the bishop; this I confess in all sincerity..."

This is a true eulogy of the angelic policy, uttered by the heart and lips of St. Nectarios. But this peaceful, holy heart could become fiery when it came to questions of faith. In one of the last works of his

1. See *The Orthodox Word*, vol. 1, no. 5, p. 165.

## ON THE WRITINGS OF ST. NECTARIOS

life, the *Manual for Priests*, St. Nectarios examines the question of the primacy of the Bishop of Rome, using a calm and clear historical judgment, from a thoroughly Orthodox point of view. He notes:

"Concerning the Evangelist John, the familiar friend of Christ, the Virgin and Theologian, what shall I say first and last? Which laud and hymn shall I bring forth? Who has heard such praise as the Evangelist has had? In the Lauds he is called "sweetness of the Trinity," after receiving all other praises. And yet, through the primacy of Peter and because of their succession to his privileges, St. John comes after and was obliged to be subordinated while living to such as Linus, Anicitus, and Clement, the successors of Peter (if indeed they were), and through them to receive the dogmatic truths!!!" (1907 ed., p. 81.) Truly an excellent reply, imposing silence on the nonsense of the Papal primacy.

Correspondence with his spiritual children, and especially with the sisterhood under his spiritual guidance, took much of the Saint's time. The largest number of his letters date from the years 1904-1908, and they present in relief the innocent soul and the attainment of the Saint. Even a small sampling of these will persuade the reader of his spiritual vitality. To the nuns in Aegina he writes:

"Seek God every day, but in your heart, and not outside of it, and on discovering Him stand with fear and trembling, like the Cherubim and Seraphim, as your heart becomes God's dwelling place. To discover the Lord, humble yourself to the earth before Him, for the Lord rejects the proud and highminded, but loves and visits the humble of heart... When we are delivered from the malice of pride and become humble, enthroning humility in our hearts, we possess all; because humility is elevating and bears with it the whole choir of virtues, and when one becomes humble all the virtues follow..."

On another occasion, wishing to protect the young and inexperienced sisterhood from excesses of indiscretion and their sad consequences, he wrote to the Abbess Xenis:

"...Remember that you are women and do not try to be equal to men... Without courage of soul great undertakings are impossible, and when one dares to commence such undertakings before his soul has been strengthened through moral virtues; he will be seduced and fall. This is why I intend and wish you to walk in the way of caution in all things, performing the obligations of the monastic state as well as the obligation

## THE ORTHODOX WORD

to maintain your body and health, seeking your moral perfection."

The reader may easily admire the simplicity of the Saint's expression and its wisdom. In this he offers a contrast to the theologians of today who occupy themselves with "intellectual" theology while remaining quite confused and unstable in thought; with them "word is fought by any word," i. e., what they build today is pulled down tomorrow, if not by themselves then by their opponents.

Both the life and the works of St. Nectarios have been a true blessing to Orthodox people. The sincere soul in search of guidance can find in him everything holy, everything elevating, a true model to follow.

His integral personality may be seen also in his face. It -- the first photograph in Orthodox hagiology, together with that of the Russian Saint John of Kronstadt -- calls all of us to see where grace and redemption are to be found, namely in the fulfillment of the commandments, and in the ministration of love.

As the rain fell on the earth of Aegina Island and gave life to the thirsty land, after three and a half years of drought, through the prayers of the Saint -- may his prayers now in heaven in the same way bring down the rain of Divine grace on us, to aid us to bring forth true works of repentance. Amen.

*An official statement, based on Soviet sources themselves,  
on the existence in the USSR of*

## THE CATAcomb CHURCH

EPISTLE OF METROPOLITAN PHILARET  
TO ORTHODOX BISHOPS AND ALL WHO HOLD DEAR  
THE FATE OF THE RUSSIAN CHURCH<sup>1</sup>

In recent days the Soviet Government in Moscow and various parts of the world celebrated a new anniversary of the October Revolution of 1917 which brought it to power.

We, on the other hand, call to mind in these days the beginning of the way of the cross for the Russian Orthodox Church, upon which from that time, as it were, all the powers of hell have fallen.

Meeting resistance on the part of Archpastors, pastors, and laymen strong in spirit, the Communist power, in its fight with religion, began from the very first days the attempt to weaken the Church not only by killing those of her leaders who were strongest in spirit, but also by means of the artificial creation of schisms.

Thus arose the so-called "Living Church" and the renovation movement, which had the character of a Church tied to a Protestant-Communist reformation. Notwithstanding the support of the Government, this schism was crushed by the inner power of the Church. It was too clear to believers that the "Renovated Church" was uncanonical and altered Orthodoxy. For this reason people did not follow it.

The second attempt, after the death of Patriarch Tikhon and the arrest of the *locum tenens* of the patriarchal throne, Metropolitan Peter, had greater success. The Soviet power succeeded in 1927 in sundering in part the inner unity of the Church. By confinement in prison, torture, and special methods, it broke the will of the vicar of the patriarchal *locum tenens*, Metropolitan Sergy, and secured from him the proclamation of a declaration of the complete loyalty of the Church to the Soviet power, even to the point where the joys and successes of the Soviet Union were declared by the Metropolitan to be the joys and successes of the Church, and its failures to be her failures. What can be more blasphemous than such

1. *Orthodox Russia*, 1965, no. 22.

## THE ORTHODOX WORD

an idea, which was justly appraised by many at that time as an attempt to unite light with darkness, and Christ with Belial. Both Patriarch Tikhon and Metropolitan Peter, as well as others who served as *locum tenens* of the Patriarchal throne, had earlier refused to sign a similar declaration, for which they were subjected to arrest, imprisonment, and banishment.

Protesting against this declaration -- which was proclaimed by Metr. Sergy by himself alone, without the agreement of the suppressed majority of the episcopate of the Russian Church, violating thus the 34th Apostolic Rule<sup>1</sup> -- many bishops who were then in the death camp at Solovki<sup>2</sup> wrote to the Metropolitan: "Any government can sometimes make decisions that are foolish, unjust, cruel, to which the Church is forced to submit, but which she cannot rejoice over or approve. One of the aims of the Soviet Government is the extirpation of religion, but the Church cannot acknowledge its successes in this direction as her own successes" (Open Letter from Solovki, Sept. 27, 1927).

The courageous majority of the sons of the Russian Church did not accept the declaration of Metr. Sergy, considering that a union of the Church with the godless Soviet State, which had set itself the goal of annihilating Christianity in general, could not exist on principle.

But a schism nonetheless occurred. The minority, accepting the declaration, formed a central administration, the so-called "Moscow Patriarchate," which, while being supposedly officially recognized by the authorities, in actual fact received no legal rights whatever from them; for they continued, now without hindrance, a most cruel persecution of the Church. In the words of Joseph, Metropolitan of Petrograd, Metr. Sergy, having proclaimed the declaration, entered upon the path of "monstrous arbitrariness, flattery, and betrayal of the Church to the interests of atheism and the destruction of the Church."

The majority, renouncing the declaration, began an illegal ecclesiastical existence. Almost all the bishops were tortured and killed in death camps, among them the *locum tenens* Metr. Peter, Metr. Cyril of

1. Which reads: *The bishops of every nation must acknowledge him who is first among them and account him as their head, and do nothing of consequence without his consent... But neither let him who is the first do anything without the consent of all...*

2. Solovki: the Solovetski Islands in the White Sea, where one of Russia's greatest coenobitic monasteries was situated. Founded by Sts. Zossima and Savvati in the 15th century, the Transfiguration Monastery was the heart of the "Northern Thebaid" and a source of Christian enlightenment and culture for the whole of the northern regions. After the Revolution of 1917 the Soviet Government turned the monastery into a forced-labor concentration camp, where thousands of innocent clergymen and laymen died, enriching with their martyrs' blood the already rich hagiography of the holy islands.

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Kazan, who was respected by all, and Metr. Joseph of Petrograd, who was shot to death at the end of 1938, as well as many other bishops and thousands of priests, monks, nuns, and courageous laymen. Those bishops and clergy who miraculously remained alive began to live illegally and to serve Divine services secretly, hiding themselves from the authorities and originating in this fashion the *Catacomb Church* in the Soviet Union.

Little news of this Church has come to the free world. The Soviet press long kept silent about her, wishing to give the impression that all believers in the USSR stood behind the Moscow Patriarchate. They even attempted to deny entirely the existence of the Catacomb Church.

But then, after the death of Stalin and the exposure of his activity, and especially after the fall of Khrushchev, the Soviet press has begun to write more and more often on the secret Church in the USSR, calling it the "sect" of *True-Orthodox Christians*. It was apparently impossible to keep silent about it any longer; its numbers are too great and it causes the authorities too much alarm.

Unexpectedly in the "Atheist Dictionary" (State Political Literature Publishers, Moscow, 1964), on pp. 123 and 124 the *Catacomb Church* is openly discussed. "*True-Orthodox Christians*," we read in the "Dictionary," "an Orthodox sect, originating in the years 1922-24. It was organized in 1927, when Metr. Sergy proclaimed the principle of loyalty to the Soviet power." "Monarchist" (we would say ecclesiastical) "elements, having united around Metr. Joseph (Petrovykh) of Leningrad" (Petrograd) "--*Josephites*," or, as the same Dictionary says, *Tikhonites*, "formed in 1928 a guiding center, the *True-Orthodox Church*, and united all groups and elements which came out against the Soviet order" (we may add from ourselves, "atheist" order). "The *True-Orthodox Church* directed into the villages a multitude of monks and nuns," for the most part of course priests, we add again from ourselves, who celebrated Divine services and rites secretly and "conducted propaganda against the leadership of the Orthodox Church," i.e., against the Moscow Patriarchate which had given in to the Soviet power, "appealing to people not to submit to Soviet laws," which are directed, quite apparently, against the Church of Christ and faith.

By the testimony of the "Atheist Dictionary," the *True-Orthodox Christians* organized and continue to organize "house," i.e., secret, "catacomb churches and monasteries... preserving in full the doctrine and rites of Orthodoxy." They "do not acknowledge the authority of the Orthodox Patriarch," i.e., the successor of Metr. Sergy, Patriarch Alexy.

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"Striving to fence off" the *True-Orthodox Christians* "from the influence of Soviet reality," chiefly of course from atheist propaganda, "their leaders... make use of the myth of *Antichrist*, who has supposedly been ruling in the world since 1917." The anti-Christian nature of the Soviet power is undoubted for any sound-thinking person, and all the more for a Christian.

*True-Orthodox Christians* "usually refuse to participate in elections," which in the Soviet Union, a country deprived of freedom, are simply a comedy, "and other public functions; they do not accept pensions, do not allow their children to go to school beyond the fourth class..." Here is an unexpected Soviet testimony of the truth, to which nothing need be added.

Honor and praise to the *True-Orthodox Christians* -- heroes of the spirit and confessors, who have not bowed before the terrible power, which can stand only by terror and force and has become accustomed to the abject flattery of its subjects. The Soviet rulers fall into a rage over the fact that there exist people who fear God more than men. They are powerless before the millions of *True Orthodox Christians*.

However, besides the *True-Orthodox Church* in the Soviet Union and the Moscow Patriarchate, which have communion neither of prayer nor of any other kind with each other, there exists yet a third part of the Russian Church -- free from oppression and persecution by the atheists -- the *Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia*. She has never broken the spiritual and prayerful bonds with the Catacomb Church in the homeland. After the last war many members of this Church appeared abroad and entered into the Russian Church Outside Russia, and thus the bond between these two Churches was strengthened yet more - a bond which has been sustained illegally up to the present time. As time goes on, it becomes all the stronger and better established.

The part of the Russian Church that is abroad and free is called upon to speak in the free world in the name of the persecuted Catacomb Church in the Soviet Union; she reveals to all the truly tragic condition of believers in the USSR, which the atheist power so carefully hushes up, with the aid of the Moscow Patriarchate; she calls on those who have not lost shame and conscience to help the persecuted.

This is why it is our sacred duty to watch over the existence of the *Russian Church Outside of Russia*. The Lord, the searcher of hearts, having permitted His Church to be subjected to oppression, persecution,

## THE CATACOMB CHURCH

and deprivation of all rights in the godless Soviet State, has given us, Russian exiles, in the free world the talent of freedom, and He expects from us the increase of this talent and a skillful use of it. And we have not the right to hide it in the earth. Let no one dare to say to us that we should do this, let no one push us to a mortal sin.

For the fate of our Russian Church we, Russian bishops, are responsible before God, and no one in the world can free us from this sacred obligation. No one can understand better than we what is happening in our homeland, of which no one can have any doubt. Many times foreigners, even Orthodox people and those vested with high ecclesiastical rank, have made gross errors in connection with the Russian Church and false conclusions concerning her present condition. May God forgive them this, since they do not know what they are doing.

This is why, whether it pleases anyone or not, the *Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia* will continue to exist and will raise her voice in the defense of the faith.

She will not be silent:

1. As long as the Soviet power shall conduct a merciless battle against the Church and believers, about which the whole Soviet press also testifies, except for the *Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate*.

2. As long as, by the testimony of the same press, there exists in the USSR a *secret, Catacomb True-Orthodox Church*, by its very existence testifying to persecutions against the faith and to complete absence of freedom of religion.

3. As long as the Soviet power shall force the hierarchs of the Moscow Patriarchate manifestly to lie and affirm that there are no persecutions against the Church in the USSR and that the Church there supposedly enjoys complete freedom in accordance with the Soviet constitution (Metropolitans Pimen, Nicodim, John of New York, Archbp. Alexy, and others).

4. As long as the *Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate*, at the demand of the authorities, does not mention even a single church that has been closed and destroyed, while at the same time Soviet newspapers speak of hundreds and thousands.

5. As long as churches in the USSR shall be defiled by atheists, being converted into movie-houses, storehouses, museums, clubs, apartments, etc., of which fact there are living witnesses in the persons of tourists who have been to Soviet Union.

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6. Until the thousands of destroyed and defiled churches shall be restored as churches of God.

7. Until the representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate in clerical robes shall cease agitating in the free world in the interest of the godless Soviet power, in this way dressing the wolf in sheep's clothing.

8. Until the hierarchs of the Moscow Patriarchate end their evil denial of the terrible and dreadful devastation of the Pochaev Lavra and other monasteries, and stop the almost complete liquidation of monks there and the terrible persecutions of her pilgrims, even to killing and murder (letters from the USSR).<sup>1</sup>

9. Until priests accused by Soviet courts shall receive the right to defend themselves freely through the Soviet press.

10. Until there shall cease calumny and ridicule of faith, the Church, priests, monks, and believing Christians in the Soviet press.

11. Until freedom shall be given to every believer in the USSR openly to confess his faith and defend it.

12. Until it shall be officially permitted children and young people to know the foundations of their faith, to visit the churches of God, to participate in Divine services and receive communion of the Holy Mysteries.

13. Until it shall be permitted parents who are believers to baptize their children without hindrance and without sad consequences for their official careers and personal happiness.

14. Until parents who raise their children religiously shall cease from being accused of crippling them, parents and children both being deprived of freedom for this and shut up in mental institutions or prison.

15. Until freedom of thought, speech, action, and voting shall be given not only to every believer, but also to every citizen of the Soviet Union, first of all to writers and creative thinkers, against whom the godless power is now waging an especially bitter battle using intolerable means.

16. Until the *Church* and religious societies in general in the USSR shall receive the most elementary rights, if only the right to be a legal person before Soviet laws, the right to own property, to direct one's own affairs in actual fact, to designate and transfer rectors of parishes and priests, to open and dedicate new churches, to preach Christianity openly not only in churches, but outside them also, especially among young

1. See *The Orthodox Word*, vol. 1, no. 3, pp. 105ff.

## THE CATACOMB CHURCH

people, etc. In other words, until the condition of all religious societies shall cease from being, one and the same, *without rights*.

Until all this shall come about, we shall not cease to accuse the godless persecutors of faith and those who evilly cooperate with them under the exterior of supposed representatives of the Church. In this the Russian Church Outside of Russia has always seen one of her important tasks. Knowing this, the Soviet power through its agents wages with her a stubborn battle, not hesitating to use any means: lies, bribes, gifts, and intimidation. We, however, shall not suspend our accusation.

Declaring this before the face of the whole world, I appeal to all our brothers in Christ -- *Orthodox bishops* -- and to all people who hold dear the fate of the persecuted Russian Church as a part of the Universal Church of Christ, for understanding, support, and their holy prayers. As for our spiritual children, we call on them to hold firmly to the truth of Orthodoxy, witnessing of her both by one's word and especially by a prayerful, devout Christian life.

THE MIRACULOUS ICONS  
OF THE MOTHER OF GOD

## THE KORSUN MOTHER OF GOD<sup>1</sup>

ACCORDING TO TRADITION the Korsun icon is from the hand of the first iconographer, St. Luke the Evangelist, who also painted other great wonderworking icons of the Mother of God: for example, those of Vladimir, Don, Tikhvin, the Passion. The history of the original Korsun icon is not clear. It was brought to Russia, according to one account, by St. Vladimir in 988, the very year of the baptism of Russia; but according to another account, in the 12th century, being received by the great St. Ephrosinia for her convent in Polotsk.

The very composition of the icon is extremely moving, the gently-leaning Infant and the position of the Theotokos evoking a harmony of encircling lines, wherein the eyes of the Mother of God form a centre and look at the viewer with sad and stern penetration... The composition is also known as *Umilenie*, "tender compassion."

In Russia before the Revolution there were a large number of very venerated miraculous icons of this type. A more recent icon in St. Isaak's Cathedral in St. Petersburg, and before that for a long time in private hands, was also venerated as miraculous; it is record'd that St. John of Kronstadt, once having visited the apartment where the icon was housed, was so moved by the beauty of it that he spent a half-hour kneeling and praying before the sacred image.

The illustration opposite is a copy from one of these old icons.

### THE WEEPING KORSUN ICON

Yet the most remarkable of all the Korsun icons was one known as that of Isborsk. Since it was glorified by miraculous tears, the information on it, taken from an old manuscript, is presented here as an addition to the list of THE WEEPING ICONS begun in volume 1, number 6, of *The Orthodox Word*:

1. Information from E. Poselyanin, *The Mother of God*, St. Petersburg, n.d.

*The Korsun Mother of God.*

A recent icon by  
the distinguished  
Russian iconographer,  
PIMEN M. SOFRONOV



Courtesy of Pimen M. Sofronov

10. *The Korsun Icon of Isborsk near Pskov.* A great and glorious miracle of the Mother of God took place in the year of our Lord 1657. On Tuesday of the sixth week of the Great and Holy Lent, on March 17, the German troops came at night to the outskirts of the Pskov-Caves Monastery and burned down a whole village, shedding much blood. The Christians living outside the nearby town of Isborsk fled in fear within the walls of this town. Among them was a widow, Eudokia, who had at home an icon of the Most Holy Mother of God with the Infant Jesus Christ, which she took with her to Isborsk and kept in her room. On March 22, Palm Sunday, just at the time when a religious procession was proceeding to the St. Nicholas Monastery outside the city, the widow lit a candle before the icon and began to pray with her daughter Photinia. And then she saw a terrible sign -- on the icon of the Most Holy Mother of God there appeared tears flowing from both eyes. The widow informed a certain churchman Simeon of this, and he took the sacred icon and brought it to the main church of the Wonderworker St. Nicholas. On March 24 the chief of the army together with others saw traces of the tears from both eyes, and from the left eye a stream of tears flowing down and stopping on the Blessed Infant. They sent an act of witness of this miracle to Archbishop Makary of Pskov, and he ordered a moleben to be sung for forty days before the icon. Thanks to the prayers of the Most Holy Mother of God, the town of Isborsk was saved from the enemy. Later the icon was brought to Pskov for a time, and then returned to the church of St. Nicholas, where it worked many miracles.

# ORTHODOXY IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

## EASTER IN THE USSR, 1966

Three accounts in the foreign press of Easter services in Moscow, while differing slightly in details, give one a general picture of some of the conditions of religious life in the USSR (reported in *Possev*, Apr. 29, 1966).

According to the Moscow correspondent of the *New York Herald-Tribune* (Apr. 11), the Elokhovsky Cathedral, where Patriarch Alexy served, was overflowing with people. Thousands upon thousands of young people surrounded the church. "...It was, this time, an unusual Easter... without harassment of believers. True, there were some shouting Komsomol youth, but they were unorganized. They were pushed aside by thousands and thousands of young people who, apparently, were interested in what the feast was all about. They crowded around, climbed fences..."

"Trying to secure a place from which to see the Patriarch and clergy in the traditional procession, they broke windows in busses and a newspaper kiosk. But as sensitive as they were to the attempts of the militia to dislodge them, they showed respect for the religious ceremony.

"Only one young man threw something like a firecracker. But he got neither applause nor any other signs of approval.

"...Seeing the crowd of young people, one can see with one's own eyes why the Party is so sensitive in this sphere. These

young people were curious; they were searching. They wanted to know first of all just what religion is. In the last few months the Party has acknowledged its well-known failures on the field of battle with religion. Now it is trying to reform its anti-religious front.

"Observing these young people, who followed the ceremonies with concentration and great respect, one can understand why the Party is disturbed."

According to the Hamburg newspaper *Welt*, there were about 100,000 people in the 40 functioning churches in Moscow on Easter night. About 6000 youths gathered outside the Elokhovsky Cathedral and, according to this report, did attempt to interfere with the services by mocking believers, playing dance music, and shouting. They were restrained by the militia only when they attempted to interfere with the procession.

The Belgian newspaper *Soir* (Apr. 14) writes that Easter was celebrated in Moscow this year with an exceptional religious fervour. Churches were overflowing with joyous believers. Many Russian Easter customs were kept, even in the homes of atheists. On Sunday families gathered around tables adorned with the traditional Easter bread (*kulich*), which is now sold in markets as "bread of spring," the initial letters of these words (XB) being the same as those of the traditional Easter greeting, "Christ is

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risen." Women stood in line for hours before the Easter services waiting for a priest to bless their *kulichi* and eggs.

The Elokhovsky Cathedral was literally surrounded by crowds of people. In addition to believers there were young people who had come out of curiosity to view the religious rituals of their fathers, and also a small group of militant atheists who came to harass; and finally, a number of long-haired, drunken hooligans, playing and dancing to frantic rhythms.

At midnight, when the bells rang and the procession came out, the crowd

strained forward to get a better look, and at the same time there were hostile cries of "Back to the Middle Ages!" and "God is dead!" to a background of jazz played by guitars. The noise reached into the Cathedral, but the cries of "Christ is risen" were repeated with such fervor that they could be heard outside.

At the Holy Trinity Monastery of St. Sergius in Zagorsk, according to the same newspaper, twenty-five young hooligans forced their way into the church and tried to disrupt the Easter services by whistling and shouting.

## NEW SOVIET DECREE ON RELIGION

A new decree of the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Republic of the USSR, published in the *Journal* of that body for Mar. 24, 1966, states what is to be considered an infringement of Art. 142 of the Criminal Code, concerning "Separation of Church and State, and of School and Church." The bare language of this decree is evident proof of how deeply the venom of atheism lies within Soviet existence. (Text cited in *Possev*, Apr. 29.)

Among those activities considered as infringements of this law are:

"Compulsory collections for the use of religious organizations and servants of a cult; preparation... or mass distribution of petitions, letters, leaflets, and other documents which appeal for non-fulfillment of the legislation on religious cults; performance of deceitful activities with the aim of inciting religious superstitions

in the masses of the population; organization and conduct of religious meetings, processions, and other ceremonies of a cult which disturb the public order; organization and systematic conduct of religious instruction of minors in violation of established laws..."

According to this decree, the "legal" right of the Soviet Government to interfere with religious activities is virtually unlimited. Further, as reported in the Paris newspaper *La Pensee Russe* (Apr. 9), to the original penalty for infringement of this law (six months at "correctional labor") is now added a new paragraph stating the penalty for a repeated offense: up to three years of "deprivation of freedom." Thus do the persecutors attempt to hasten their goal: the liquidation of religion.

## NEW BOOKS

THE WAY OF A PILGRIM and THE PILGRIM CONTINUES HIS WAY, trans. by R. M. French. The Seabury Press, New York, 1965 (paperback ed.).

Should you ever make a visit to any of our true Orthodox monasteries and display some interest in the spiritual life of the inhabitants, you are liable to be approached by some spiritual man or a father confessor of this community, who will hand you a little book before starting to talk about anything else. You should accept this cordial gesture. And the next thing you know you will be roaming the peaceful monastery grounds engrossed in the simple narrative of this precious little volume. An entirely new world will gradually unfold before your spiritual self, a land you have never really travelled on before. You will be making a pilgrimage into the world of Orthodox spirituality, to the sanctuary of your heart, where is the workshop of *the art of arts* -- the Jesus Prayer, which is man's personal contact with God. You will skim with the Pilgrim through the great holy places of old Holy Russia, covering vast distances from Pochaev Monastery to St. Innocent's Irkutsk, from the holy caves of Kiev to the deserts of the "Northern Thebaid" -- Valaam, Konevits, Solovetsky Monastery. And you will be won by this living *podvizhnik* talking with you and witnessing this same old world of ours as a transfigured threshold of heaven, and you will become a witness to it yourself. If you will only utter a single sigh of repentance and humility,

you might continue this life-long pilgrimage heavenwards even after you finish the book and leave the monastery. But should you dare to tread this holy path for the sake of excitement, not having humbled and cleansed yourself, with carnal passions lurking within you, you will fall into the pit of *prelest*, from which return is difficult.

The very reason the monastery spiritual advisor begins with this book is to test your spiritual readiness, so he can give you, if you let him, the proper spiritual food in the right proportion. The Orthodox spiritual life has its own laws and norms, and only in accordance with them can one develop spiritually.

This book has become a classic even in its English translation (it has had at least four printings since 1954 and now for the first time appears in a paperback edition); it has even been a major issue in one of J. D. Salinger's books, *Franny and Zooey*. Hence it is often superficially recommended as "spiritual reading" by almost anyone, without the slightest notion of the dangers it may bring if put into practice without adequate knowledge of the teachings of the Holy Fathers. Needless to say, it is only with such knowledge and in a proper Orthodox context that it can bring any true spiritual benefit.

G. P.

The book reviewed here may be purchased from ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN BOOKS & ICONS for \$1.95.



## A PILGRIMAGE TO THE ORTHODOX

## HOLY PLACES OF AMERICA

### THE FIRST PILGRIMAGE

NEAR THE center of the State of New York lies an extensive **district** of country, whose surface is a succession of hills and dales, or to speak with greater deference to geographical definitions, of **mountains and valleys**... The mountains are generally arable to the tops, although instances are not wanting where the sides are jutted with rocks, that aid greatly in giving to the country that romantic and picturesque character which it so eminently possesses. The vales are narrow, rich, and cultivated, with a stream uniformly winding through each.

"A narrow belt of country, extending for a short distance on either side of the Hudson, with a similar occupation of fifty miles on the banks of the Mohawk... and a few isolated settlements on chosen land along the margins of streams, compose the country..."

This is the land of the Mohawk River Valley, as described by the great American writer, a native to these parts, *James Fenimore Cooper*, in the opening passages of his adventurous novel, *The Pioneers*.

In the center of this region, on the southern bank of the river, is a little historic town, named after this "waterway to the West." Some fifteen miles south of town (Exit 30 on the New York Thruway and then south on Route 28), as the country gradually develops into a rich green pastureland handsomely landscaped with groves and dotted with white colonial-type farmhouses and sleepy villages, a unique golden-domed Byzantine monastery towers to adorn a windy plateau a mile from Jordanville. Almost on the site of a horrible Indian massacre of white settlers is the humble locality where two young God seekers, leaving the ways of this world, settled with an ardent desire to work solely for God and to establish a monastery in the full Orthodox tradition in the fertile ground of the New World -- in the name and to the glory of the Holy Trinity...



## HOLY TRINITY MONASTERY

NEAR JORDANVILLE, NEW YORK

Monasteries — for the Church, for religion are the same as universities, colleges, clinics — for science. In our days the foundation of a decent monastery is more useful than the formation of, perhaps, two universities and a hundred public schools.

K. N. Leontiev.

**H**E FIRST IDEAS of an Orthodox monastery in America stem back to Fr. Herman's wished-for "New Valaam," but the first realization of a monastery was St. Tikhon's in Pennsylvania. There, plowing earth and sweating in physical labor, Rev. Father Panteleimon (Paul Niznik), founder of the Holy Trinity Monastery, spent his first monastic years. He was a Russian country lad who emigrated to America, only to realize his inner quest — to lead a life of *podvig*. But the noisy life of a newly-formed monastic community had too many worldly attachments and he prayed and waited for God to show him the way. Besides, when Metr. Sergy's declaration enslaved the Russian Church to the atheistic Soviet government, a majority of Russian churches in America failed to remain with the rest of the Russian Church Abroad in its stand against the "Soviet Church"; and his monastery was no exception.

One day a young man came on a pilgrimage to the monastery and soon opened his heart's desire to leave the world and enter this monastery. Having become convinced in the sincerity of young Ivan (Kolos), Fr. Panteleimon told him of the shortcomings of this place and revealed his wish for a true monastic life of seclusion... And thus, on the hundred dollars Ivan had, a small "convenient" piece of land was bought and the



Vaults and dome of the main church, the work of monastery icon-painter Fr. Cyprian and his student Fr. Alypy; the chandelier was made by Fr. Pimen.

two settled in the swampy brush near Jordanville. That was in 1930. At once they followed the daily cycle of church services, rising before dawn, and toiling in the field, looking after some livestock and building themselves their shelter.

Hardly had they settled and consecrated a small wooden church, when a fire destroyed literally everything they had managed to acquire for the minimum of a monk's life. In awe the two watched as their work and dream turned to ashes. Now they had nothing to themselves but the burnt earth upon which they stood. Was it, they thought, that God did not want them to be there, or, perhaps, was it a test of their faith and determination? In holy anger Fr. Panteleimon turned to his shattered friend and said:

"Now, do you still want to be a monk?..."

The next day Ivan became Father Joseph! And this was the beginning of the largest and the most influential monastery in this continent, a citadel of Orthodoxy, a bastion of monasticism, a guardian of basic Christianity. The first American Lavra.

**A**ND SO THEY LEFT these deserted grounds in quest of employment, only to return and rebuild. Fr. Panteleimon worked hard at the Sikorsky plant and returned with new strength. They had great ideas; inspired by the popular *Trinity Leaflets* of St. Sergius Lavra, by the writings of Poselyanin and Nilus, and especially by the activity of young Archim. Vitaly, who restored the historic printing shop at the Lavra of St. Job of Pochaev, -- they saw clearly how Orthodox America was badly in need of *a mission of the printed word*. But even more, America needed to know the fragrance of authentic traditional monasticism, which the two so ardently desired.

Since there were no experienced spiritual directors to turn to, no *startsi*, they resolved on hard labor on their farm as a sure protection against the varied forms of *prelest*, from whose pits, they knew, there is no return. They took to it with great fervor, enduring severe winter cold, shortage of food, fuel and clothing, yet not missing a single church service. Those who joined them found this regimen almost impossible to endure.

Their zealous perseverance and insight attracted to them, as it were, the spirit of their beloved inspirer:

**V**ITALY, THE FAMED monk-printer of Pochaev, was made bishop and sent to America, where he, being their ruling bishop, joined the vigorous brothers and was soon to bless a linotype, uttering these prophetic words:

*Beloved brothers in Christ! Ten years you have toiled with eagerness at farm work, bettering and enlarging it, not for earthly enrichment, but in order to have a sound material foundation of your own in order to serve the word of God... I have witnessed your great labor, I have wondered at your persistency and endurance, and with joy I have listened to your dreams.... Dark times have come to earth and, as it was foretold, the famine of hearing God's word has begun. Now is the time for your holy monastic obedience to the word of God, when not only the 5000 mentioned in the Gospel, but millions of spiritually starving people are perishing. "Give them to eat," says our Lord.*

And indeed the monastery printshop has grown, to become today the largest publisher of religious literature in Russian and Slavonic.

After the war the St. Job Brotherhood arrived from Czechoslovakia to join their Abbot-bishop Vitaly. They at once began a large church, which was consecrated in 1950 by the late Metr. Anastassy, who now rests in its north wing under the altar. The church was based on 12th century tent style by Architect Verkhovskoy, and the interior is a masterpiece of iconography, probably the finest on this continent.

**E**HE CHURCH is the heart of the monastery; its bell at 5:00 a.m. begins the day summoning monks for nocturn, its 16th century Rostov-style frescoed vaults echo Znamenny and Kiev chants and the dazzling monastic beauty of stikhias sung *na podobny* as the monks descend to the basement church of St. Job. There, before his icon with relics, a gift from Pochaev, a vigil-light unceasingly burns. Among other important relics the monastery has a large reliquary of eighty-eight saints of the Kiev-Caves Monastery. At 7:30, after supper, the whole hundred-soul community attends compline to end the day, and as they leave the church they bow down before icons and relics of saints who are to intercede for them before the Highest, to Whom together with clouds of incense rises their soul-stirring Pochaev chant.

As night descends and wraps the world in the oblivion of sleep, the monk in his cell, like a candle of offering before the altar, keeps watch over his heart. Monasticism, in the words of Bp. Theophan the Recluse, is a sacrifice offered to God from the world and for the world.

Icon-screen of the main church, hand-carved by the monks.



**H**E SEMINARY was Archbp. Vitaly's long-time wish to realize his idea of what today's pastors ought to be. The promising beginnings at Jordanville offered him an inviting opportunity.

A life long friend of the monastery, Mrs. Helen Alexander, who willed it her precious library of the Holy Fathers, made her husband promise at her death bed to devote the rest of his life to helping the newly-formed monastery. As a result of this promise a seminary arose as an amazing achievement of this courageous man. Dr. Nicholas N. Alexander, former Lieutenant Commander of the Imperial Russian Navy and professor of aeronautics at the Rhode Island University, is now Dean of this school of higher education, which is fully accredited by the Board of Education of the State of N. Y. and presently enrolls over sixty students from all over the world. It carries an extensive well-balanced curriculum of the sciences and humanities and most of the subjects are conducted in Russian. The five-year scholastic program also provides some knowledge in a trade or special training. Its rector, the most Rev. Archbishop Averky, recently consecrated grounds for a new library building, modeled after the Seminary building in the old Pochaev Lavra, to house its 20,000 volumes on theology and all sciences in many languages. The rural landscape and the monastic setting provide a perfect atmosphere for a reflective God-seeker.

**E**VERY CHRISTIAN is called to be a warrior combating the spirit of this temporal world on the battlefield of his own self. Monks have made it their life's vocation and have developed a spiritual strategy from which Orthodox Christians can draw help for themselves. Monasteries throughout the ages have served society by preserving this wisdom and passing it on to new generations, and despite the drastic revolutionary changes in the world their work has gone on.

Nowadays, however, when Christians who cherish true Christianity are once again gradually to descend into the catacombs, a warrior must be well-informed and quite aware what precisely constitutes true Christianity, so as not to be led astray, for he is to defend its purity.

A well trained "army" of such warriors, either monks or priests in the world, is what Archbp. Vitaly had in his heart and mind. From the time when he published his magazine *The Russian Monk*, in Pochaev, he called young men to *podvig*. His spiritual sons, merely by the witness of their integral life, do likewise, as the visiting pilgrim can plainly see. In the free world they can carry on their work -- raising their Cross high before them, as they proceed through this earthly life striving for heavenly crowns. (On Pochaev and Archbp. Vitaly see *The Orthodox Word* no. 3, 1965)

Next issue: *A Pilgrimage to St. Tikhon's Monastery in Pennsylvania.*



**H**WICE A YEAR the monastery celebrates its feast days: Pentecost and St. Job of Pochaev day, which is celebrated on Labor-day weekend. Then the venerated Pochaev Icon (an exact replica of the original) arrives from New York, being met half a mile away by a procession from the monastery with the icon of St. Job. After returning to the main church an akathist is sung to St. Job by the whole congregation.

There is a 40-room guesthouse near the monastery to accommodate pilgrims the year round. Pilgrims, upon arriving at the monastery, should get a blessing to stay from the Abbot, Archbishop Averky.

